

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama's Proclamation on Women's Equality Day

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
August 25, 2011

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY, 2011

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

The 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution tore down the last formal barrier to women's enfranchisement in our Nation and empowered America's women to have their voices heard in the halls of power. This Amendment became law only after decades of work by committed trailblazers who fought to extend the right to vote to women across America. For the women who fought for this right, voting was not the end of the journey for equality, but the beginning of a new era in the advancement of our Union. These brave and tenacious women challenged our Nation to live up to its founding principles, and their legacy inspires us to reach ever higher in our pursuit of liberty and equality for all.

Before the Amendment took effect, women had been serving our Nation in the public realm since its earliest days. Even before they gained the right to vote, America's women were leaders of movements, academics, and reformers, and had even served in the Congress. Legions of brave women wrote and lectured for change. They let their feet speak when their voices alone were not enough, protesting and marching for their fundamental right to vote in the face of heckling, jail, and abuse. Their efforts led to enormous progress -- millions upon millions of women have since used the power of the ballot to help shape our country.

Today, our Nation's daughters reap the benefits of these courageous pioneers while paving the way for generations of women to come. But work still remains. My Administration is committed to advancing equality for all of our people. This year, the Council of Women and Girls released "Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being," the most comprehensive report in 50 years on the status of women in our country, shedding light on issues women face in employment, crime, health, and family life. We are working to ensure that women-owned businesses can compete in the marketplace, that women are not discriminated against in healthcare, and that we redouble our efforts to bring an end to sexual assault on college campuses.

On the 91st anniversary of this landmark in civil rights, we continue to uphold the foundational American principles that we are all equal, and that each of us deserves a chance to pursue our dreams. We honor the heroes who have given of themselves to advance the causes of justice, opportunity, and prosperity. As we celebrate the legacy of those who made enormous strides in the last century and before, we renew our commitment to hold true to the dreams for which they fought, and we look forward to a bright future for our Nation's daughters.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 2011, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate the achievements of women and recommit ourselves to the goal of gender equality in this country.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

Bernanke Says U.S. Economy Recovering Despite Slow Growth

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke says the U.S. economy is recovering and long-term prospects remain strong despite reports showing slower-than-expected growth for the first half of 2011.

"Although important problems certainly exist, the growth fundamentals of the United States do not appear to have been permanently altered by the shocks of the past four years," Bernanke said. He added that while it may take time, the United States can "reasonably expect to see a return to growth rates and employment levels consistent with those underlying fundamentals."

The chairman spoke August 26 at a conference of central bank leaders from around the world held each year in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. His remarks followed the Commerce Department's report earlier in the day that growth in the U.S. economy from April to June came in at an annual rate of just 1 percent, a downward revision from the government's previous 1.3 percent growth estimate.

Increases in fixed investment, exports and federal government spending contributed to second-quarter

growth, according to the report. Gains were partly offset by drops in state and local government spending, private investment and an increase in imports.

The lowered second-quarter figures follow a July revision of first-quarter growth down from 1.9 percent to 0.4 percent, indicating a near stagnation of the U.S. economy.

Growth of the economy is a primary indicator of economic health and is measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), or the country's total output of goods and services.

Bernanke said that although he maintains a positive long-term outlook for the U.S. economy, it is clear that the economic recovery has been "much less robust than we had hoped."

He said the latest comprehensive revisions and the most recent estimates of growth for the first half of 2011 show the economic crisis was deeper — and the recovery weaker — than economists predicted. He said production in the United States still has not returned to pre-crisis levels and that growth has been too slow to replace jobs lost in the economic downturn.

In its latest report, the Commerce Department said the U.S. economy added 117,000 new jobs from June to July as the unemployment rate ticked down slightly to 9.1 percent. Bernanke said the United States is suffering from an "extraordinarily high level of long-term unemployment," with nearly half of the unemployed having been out of work for more than six months. He called on policymakers to make putting Americans back to work a top priority, as "minimizing the duration of unemployment supports a healthy economy by avoiding some of the erosion of skills and loss of attachment to the labor force that is often associated with long-term unemployment."

For its part, Bernanke said, the Federal Reserve will continue to monitor economic conditions and carefully adjust its policies accordingly. He said the Federal Open Market Committee, the policymaking arm of the Federal Reserve, will meet in late September to discuss all options to support economic growth.

The committee last met August 9 when it announced it would keep the target range for the federal funds rate — the rate banks are charged for overnight loans — at 0 percent to 0.25 percent. The committee said the decision was in response to increased threats to the economy and fluctuating inflation rates.

Bernanke did not indicate whether the committee would take additional measures to stabilize the economy.

Libya Receiving \$1.5 Billion in Financial Assets Frozen in U.S.

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is releasing \$1.5 billion in Libyan assets that had been frozen under U.N. sanctions directed against Muammar Qadhafi's regime, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged other countries that are holding Libyan assets to expedite their release.

"We have secured the release of \$1.5 billion in Libyan assets that had been frozen in the United States. This money will go toward meeting the needs of the people of Libya," Clinton said in an August 25 statement.

"We urge other nations to take similar measures. Many are already doing so," she said.

The political transition from Qadhafi's 42-year rule is being led by Libya's Transitional National Council (TNC). Clinton urged the council to "fulfill its international responsibilities and the commitments it has made to build a tolerant, unified, democratic state — one that protects the universal human rights of all its citizens."

Financial analysts have estimated that nearly \$110 billion in Libyan assets is frozen in banks worldwide, according to press reports.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters August 25 that the \$1.5 billion represents the TNC's "assessment of their urgent needs."

She said U.S. and TNC officials have been working for weeks on how to release the funds. "We've been sitting with the TNC and taking them through the necessary safeguarding and auditing processes. We have high confidence that this is the right amount from us now, and that we have set in place structures and ways to ensure that this money gets to the right people and is used ... for humanitarian and civilian needs," she said.

One-third of the money will be used for "urgent humanitarian needs," with \$120 million paying U.N. agencies for the services they are already providing in Libya and the remaining \$380 million "held for future needs that will come through the U.N. system as the Libyan people and the TNC assess what would be appropriate," Nuland said.

A second portion of \$500 million will go for civilian fuel needs associated with electricity and desalination, particularly in hospitals and other public facilities, Nuland said. About \$300 million of the funds will reimburse entities that have been helping Libya meet its civilian fuel needs, and the remaining money will be held

to pay future civilian fuel bills.

The last third of the money will be deposited in the temporary financial mechanism (TFM) that was established by the Libya Contact Group to facilitate financial contributions and in-kind assistance to the TNC.

“That money will be held in the TFM, and the Libyan people will be able to draw on it to meet needs in the following three categories: health, education and urgent food needs,” Nuland said. “As the TNC establishes its requirements in these areas, comes up with bills that need paying in the area of health, education and food, it will be able to submit those bills to the TFM steering board for payment.”

Nuland said the focus on humanitarian needs, civilian fuel and funding the TFM are priorities that the Libyans themselves made.

“They are based on their assessment of what their people need, not only in the areas that they controlled, but also in Tripoli and other places where they’ve had contacts throughout this crisis,” she said.

The TNC is working to establish an interim government and extend its control throughout the country. Nuland said previous transitional states have shown they can establish effective governing institutions, but it requires hard work.

“We have to remember what this country’s been for 42 years — a state where the only rule of law came out of the head of Qadhafi. So they’ve got work to do. They’re going to need international support as they do it,” she said.

Investments in New Ideas to Clean Emissions May Bring Better Air

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — One of the best ways to contain and even reverse climate change is to prevent the release of greenhouse gases that trap the sun’s heat and cause temperatures to rise. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced August 25 that it will invest \$41 million in that strategy over the next three years.

DOE is providing grants to 16 private-sector companies and institutions to develop ideas for “post-combustion technologies for capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from coal-fired power plants.” The projects are intended to develop a method for cleaning up emissions that is cheaper and more efficient than the methods now in use.

Today’s carbon-capture technologies create what are called “parasitic losses”: a significant portion of the energy produced by a plant becomes unavailable for

utility customers because it is used to scrub the emissions.

The research DOE is underwriting will focus on technologies that can remove at least 90 percent of CO₂ from emissions and increase the cost of electricity by no more than 35 percent.

“Charting a path toward clean coal is essential to achieving our goals of providing clean energy, creating American jobs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions,” said U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu. “It will also help position the United States as a leader in the global clean-energy race.”

These are among the projects that have won DOE support:

- Use of ultrasonic energy forces to dissolve CO₂ into gas bubbles.
- Use of organic-based solvents to capture CO₂ emissions.
- Use of rapid pressure changes to capture and release CO₂.
- Use of an absorbing agent to capture emissions.

The Obama administration aspires to the deployment of a cost-effective carbon capture technology within 10 years.

For its part, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in the process of enacting a proposed rule to enforce emissions regulations on coal-fired plants. In March, the agency announced a proposed rule to limit emissions of mercury, arsenic, chromium, nickel and acid gases. The regulation would require many power plants to install existing pollution control technologies to scrub their emissions, though more than half of the nation’s power plants have adopted these technologies voluntarily.

In announcing the proposal, EPA said the measure would prevent as many as 17,000 premature deaths and 11,000 heart attacks a year. EPA said the new standards would also provide particular health benefits for children, preventing 120,000 cases of childhood asthma symptoms and about 11,000 fewer cases of acute bronchitis among children each year. The proposed standards would also avert more than 12,000 emergency room visits and hospital admissions and 850,000 fewer days of work missed because of illness, EPA said.

Famine Soon to Worsen in Somalia, Report Predicts

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — A new analysis of food security in the Horn of Africa reports that the level of acute malnutrition for people in some areas of Somalia exceeds 50 percent. Food insecurity will worsen to become famine in most

areas of southern Somalia within four to six weeks, according to an August 24 report from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

With backing from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), FEWS NET keeps watch on the status of food security in more than 30 nations. Using data from trained observers in the region and satellite and scientific data, FEWS NET predicted the onset of famine in the Horn of Africa as much as a year ago. It is considered among the most authoritative sources on current conditions and what's to come.

Drought is widely known to be the cause of the poor harvest and the resulting hunger in the region, but the latest FEWS NET report details just how sparse the season has been this year. The rainy period from April to June, known as the Gu, usually creates conditions for agriculture productivity in the arid region, but not this year.

"Gu 2011 cereal production in southern Somalia is estimated at 37,600 [metric tons]," the report says. "This is the lowest Gu cereal production in the last 17 years and represents only 26 percent of the 1995-2010 post-war average."

The report says poor irrigation infrastructure and high irrigation competition also helped to diminish harvest yields, along with crop pests and diseases.

While Somalia's crop yields were poor this year, the herders had a better year. The report notes average pasture and water conditions, allowing Somalis practicing a pastoral livelihood to follow normal livestock migrations where herds can adequately graze.

A combination of low incomes and high cereal prices has also put food farther out of reach for average Somalis. "Food prices are exorbitantly high for the majority of households," the report says.

FEWS NET monitors about 30 famine-prone countries around the world. It collects data from diverse sources to constantly evaluate levels of food security and issue warnings in the event of dangerous food shortages.

The drought is considered the region's worst in about 60 years. Food shortages are being experienced in neighboring countries beyond Somalia, and malnutrition is thought to be the worst in 20 years, touching an estimated 12.5 million people across the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti.

It's been estimated that close to \$2.5 billion will be needed to address the region's humanitarian crisis, but so far donors have pledged only about \$1 billion. Nations of the

African Union (AU) came together August 25 in a pledging conference, where additional commitments for \$350 million were made. It was the first time the AU had attempted to organize its members for this type of appeal.

While the needs of the moment are great, many are trying to look beyond the current crisis for longer-term solutions to Africa's food security. "We must ensure that we address the root causes and not simply throw money at it and wait for another emergency in a few years," said Jerry Rawlings, special representative of the AU for Somalia.

The United States has pledged to contribute about \$580 million for humanitarian relief in the Horn of Africa, and as Rawlings suggests, has developed a program called Feed the Future, which aspires to create greater food security in the region with better agricultural skills, techniques and infrastructure development.

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